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ABSTRACT

This article presents a detailed description of an individualized reading program developed at Ohlone College in Fremont, California. The program is designed to help students become independent learners in their content area courses. It consists of three interrelated components: a 60-page "Tutor's Handbook," a series of videotaped study skills lessons, and eight individualized reading and study skills courses. The bulk of the article is taken up with a description of each of the program's components and an explanation of their importance in assisting students to study independently and effectively in other college courses. (RB)

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INDIVIDUALIZED APPROACH TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE READING AND STUDY SKILLS

Convention Session: Content Reading in the High School and Junior College (Friday, May 16, 9:00 to 10:00 A.M.)

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Ohlone College in Fremont, California, has developed a comprehensive and unique program which is designed to help each student become an independent learner in his content area courses. This program or system consists of three interrelated components: a sixty page Tutor's Handbook, a series of videotaped study skills lessons and eight individualized reading and study skills courses. This article presents a detailed description of each of these components and their importance in assisting the student to study independently and effectively in his college courses.

COMPONENT ONE: THE TUTOR'S HANDBOOK

The first major component of Ohlone College's program aimed at developing independent learners is the sixty page Tutor's Handbook developed by the reading lab supervisor. This handbook is designed to be used by the many subject area tutors who are available through various departments and programs on campus to help students who are experiencing learning difficulties in content courses (e.g. history, science). One of the basic principles upon which the Tutor's Handbook is based is the belief that the student who is experiencing learning difficulties in a course must not only receive help with the specific questions or parts of the course for which he is seeking aid, but he must also be given the study tools which will provide him with the ability to achieve success on his own. Although the subject area tutor's primary responsibility is to assist his tutee master the content of a specific course, he is providing an essential and invaluable service when he also helps the tutee become an independent learner through the acquisition of effective study skills. Therefore, the

Ohlone College Tutor's Handbook not only contains general guidelines on how to work with the tutee, but it also provides study skills suggestions which the tutor can share with his tutee.

Before a particular tutor uses his copy of the handbook, he is required to receive an orientation concerning its values, purposes and content. This orientation is accomplished by the use of a videotaped presentation, which gives the tutor an overview of the booklet and directs his attention to the content and purposes of its various sections. The use of a videotaped presentation provides needed flexibility since the lab supervisor and tutor cannot always easily and conveniently arrange a conference together. This use of a videotaped orientation has proven to be very successful.

Another unplanned but valuable use of the handbook has been the adoption of the handbook by several instructors as a resource book for study skills suggestions to present to their students in class and in personal conferences. Furthermore, the reference librarian has duplicated the section of the handbook which describes learning resources in the library and distributes it to students during library orientation presentations.

The following is an outline of the contents of the Tutor's Handbook:

1. Introductory Section - contains information on how to use the handbook, the table of contents, ten basic principles for working with a tutee with a cartoon to illustrate each principle, and a three page tutor's checklist.
2. Section One: Diagnostic Testing - contains suggestions for informally determining how well the tutee comprehends his text when he reads it and a mathematics diagnostic test to use when

appropriate.

3. Section Two: Study Skills Suggestions - contains information on several study skills topics which the tutor should share with the tutee. These topics include "Setting Up a Study Schedule," "How to Use a Textbook Effectively," "Suggestions for Taking Lecture Notes," "How to Remember Better," and several other common study skills topics.
4. Section Three: Learning Resources on Campus - contains information about various courses, services and labs on campus which are designed to help students achieve in college.
5. Section Four: Master Vocabulary List - this is a list of essential words compiled from lists made available by each department on campus.
6. Appendices A, B and C - consist of a study habits checklist for the tutee's use in analyzing his study habits, a bibliography of books on how to study and a list of the hundred most frequently misspelled words.

COMPONENT TWO: VIDEOTAPED STUDY SKILLS LESSONS

Despite the availability of the Tutor's Handbook, the reading lab supervisor realized that this was not sufficient to meet the needs of all the students at Ohlone who needed or were interested in improving their study skills; those students who did not seek tutoring help would not be exposed to the suggestions in the handbook. Many students and instructors would informally contact the lab supervisor requesting insights into such skills as how to remember better, how to read faster, etc.. The students wanted the information to apply it to their studies; the instructors wanted the information to share with their

students in the classroom or the office. At the same time that they wanted these suggestions, there were many of the students who did not need a complete study skills course or did not have the available time for an extended course; they needed or wanted information on a specific topic and had only limited time in an already busy school schedule.

In order to meet these needs the lab supervisor with the cooperation of the college's audiovisual department produced fifteen videotaped lessons, each one concerning a specific study skill topic. They include such topics as "How to Read a Textbook," "How to Improve Your Reading Rate," "How to Concentrate Better," and several other common topics. These videotaped presentations are available in the reading lab for individual and informal use by any student or instructor at Ohlone College. The student may view a videotape at his convenience any time during the hours the lab is open. He may view one or more videotapes which meets his needs or concerns. Each videotape has accompanying worksheets, guidesheets and voluntary check tests so that the student may check his understanding or mastery of the information in the presentation. Some instructors have borrowed individual tapes to use and discuss in their classrooms for the benefit of their students.

The flexibility and easy access of these videotaped study skills lessons have provided interested students on the campus with a convenient procedure for obtaining study skills suggestions and have provided another individualized means to help students become independent learners in all their subjects.

COMPONENT THREE: EIGHT INDIVIDUALIZED COURSES

For those students enrolled at Ohlone College who needed or desired an intensive and extended series of skill building activities, a total

of eight individualized courses were developed to enable them to develop those skills essential for successful reading and studying. The courses offered are: vocabulary improvement, skimming and scanning techniques, improvement of learning techniques, speed reading, reading rate improvement, improvement of word attack skills, reading comprehension improvement, and spelling improvement. Each course carries one unit in English, with the exception of the skimming and scanning course which is a half unit. The student has the option of enrolling in each course for a letter grade or on a credit/no credit basis. We have an open lab situation, which allows each student to schedule his required three weekly lab hours to fit his school schedule.

Most of the skill building materials used in these courses is commercially available material. These commercial materials were selected after an extensive survey of available materials and after visits to several established community college reading centers. By providing a large selection of materials for each course, the lab was able to develop courses which could meet the needs of students on all levels of ability, remedial through advanced.

During his first hour in the lab, each student is pretested; a post-test is administered at the completion of the course to measure the student's progress. The second hour consists of an orientation to the particular course in which the student has enrolled, an explanation of his test results and a list of recommended skill building materials for his use; each student also receives a folder containing the necessary worksheets, guidesheets and record forms for the course.

One of the major difficulties encountered in conducting these courses was caused by the emphasis on the individualization of the

course for each student. Because each course of study was individualized for each student, the lab personnel found themselves in a situation in which most of their time was devoted to demonstrating and explaining the use of materials and equipment to students. This activity interfered with the opportunity for the lab personnel to assist individual students when their needs for instructional help arose while they were using their assigned materials. This undesirable situation was overcome by the lab supervisor's development and production of sixty-one video-cassette tapes. These videotapes were divided into three categories: 1) orientation, 2) how to use machines, and 3) how to use texts.

For each of the eight courses, there is an orientation tape which presents the student with an explanation of the purposes, procedures and materials for the course in which he is enrolled. Thus, the student is not restricted to coming to the lab at personally inconvenient times for an orientation hour, and late enrollees can be started immediately on their work with a minimal interruption of other students.

This same value applies to the videotapes which demonstrate or explain the use of each machine and programmed text used in the courses. For example, if a student enrolled in the speed reading course is directed to use the Craig Reader, he obtains the videotape entitled "How to Use the Craig Reader;" the videotape explains the purpose and values of using the machine, how to operate it and how to use its accompanying materials. The student can easily and conveniently replay any section of a tape if he did not grasp the information the first time or if he wants another view of a demonstration. Meanwhile, the reading lab personnel are free to work with students who need individual instruction, testing, encouragement or counseling.

Finally, the lab also trains and provides special reading tutors who are available to tutor those remedial students who are unable to progress through an individualized program on their own. These are students who need extended tutoring on a one-to-one or small group basis. Until they reach a level at which they can function on their own, the lab supervisor assigns these students to individualized programs which require work with a trained student tutor.

CONCLUSION

Each student, regardless of his level of ability or his year in school, must ultimately develop his reading/study skills to the degree that he can become an effective and independent learner. Ohlone College is attempting to provide its students with this independence to study effectively in the content area courses. The college is helping its students attain this goal through the training of content area tutors and instructors to share study skills suggestions and techniques with their tutees and students by using the Tutor's Handbook as a resource book, through the availability of a series of videotaped study skills lessons which are easily accessible for student and instructor use, and through an open lab which offers individualized, multilevel, self-pacing courses in reading/study skills for credit and provides trained reading tutors for the remedial reading students.